TESTIMONY OF
PAUL ROTH
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
CINGULAR WIRELESS

BEFORE THE

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE
ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

September 22, 2005

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the impact of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath on the Cingular Wireless Network. I am Paul Roth, Cingular's Executive Vice President for External Affairs and Public Relations, and my testimony today will describe what happened after we put our hurricane crisis plan into effect, how we responded to the ensuing events, and what actions we are taking to improve our overall crisis response.

I. WHAT HAPPENED

I'd like to begin with an overview of the damage to our network and its causes with an emphasis on the hardest-hit areas in and around New Orleans and Biloxi. By the time Katrina and the related flooding that it caused reached its peak, we had lost about 85 percent of our network in the hardest hit areas. The primary network-affecting events were split between physical damage (20 percent) to our facilities and damage to the additional infrastructure that we depend on for power and connections (80 percent). Of course, simple percentages and familiar words don't always convey the magnitude of the destruction that our network infrastructure endured.

I'd like to call your attention to Attachments #1 and #2 below. The first shows an active cell site that turned into nothing but a concrete platform after Katrina. The second shows a crushed cell tower. Though we build our towers to withstand winds of 200 miles per hour, that does not make them invincible to the "debris-missiles" launched by 150 mile per hour winds. As bad as the damage from wind and debris was, the most significant single hit that our network took came when the levees broke and one of the two core switches in New Orleans became completely submerged.

II. HOW WE RESPONDED

Our first response to Katrina began long before the hurricane ever hit land. Both Cingular and AT&T Wireless had well-developed crisis plans before our merger. After our merger, one of the first actions we took was to meld these plans together. In the late spring we ran an exercise in crisis response and used one of the first storms of this season as a live, real-time test of our plan.

First Response. Our initial response was to set up staging areas to support our employees and to restore service. We engineered an initial deployment that included 500 portable generators, 800,000 gallons of fuel, 1,000 service personnel, and more than 30 portable cell sites called COWS and the first of a new breed of devices called satellite COLTS. In some instances we were among the first responders in heavily-damaged communities. In those cases we provided support to other first responders in the area. These joint efforts included: setting up a generator at Trent Lott Airport and restoring power so the airport could support emergency flight operations; providing fuel to police and other emergency personnel; and making 230 satellite phones and more than 3,500 other wireless phones with Wireless Priority Service to other first responders.

Employees. We moved immediately to take care of our employees so they could take care of our customers. We provided food, water, and basic supplies from trailers that we trucked into the affected areas. We also set up tent cities in Ocean Springs and Hammond that housed as many as 400 people. And, in less than two weeks, we were providing inoculations, banking services, and even day care from licensed providers at our call center in Ocean Springs.

Services. We brought in trained personnel from throughout the country to restore service as expeditiously as possible. Within three weeks of Katrina's landfall in Louisiana, we had restored geographic coverage in New Orleans to 92 percent and in Biloxi to 97 percent. But coverage is not the same as capacity. Even though our restored network covers nearly all the geography it did before the storm, the overall capacity of our network is a bit further behind. The combination of physical damage to 68 cell sites and the disruption of the wired networks in New Orleans and Biloxi means that as of 9/19 our network is functioning at 75 percent of capacity in New Orleans and 100 percent of capacity in Biloxi. But in Biloxi, where wireless is the sole means of communication for many people, call volumes are at 140 percent of capacity; and people are still experiencing some blocking as we add additional capacity.

III. WHAT WE LEARNED

Katrina has demonstrated that there is no thickness of steel or level of network redundancy that can guarantee any communications network will survive a worst-case natural or man-made disaster. However, with each crisis faced we improve our crisis plan and increase the speed and efficiency of our response.

The two most important lessons we learned from Katrina were the effectiveness of Wireless Priority Services (WPS) and the need to develop a wireless solution for worst-case scenarios where the local network infrastructure has been destroyed.

Wireless Priority Access. Because of the unprecedented volume of calls made on the wireless network following 9/11, we built (per federal direction) the capability to prioritize wireless calls following a disaster so that the most important calls coming from first responders were the first calls completed. This functionality was put to its first real test after Hurricane Katrina and it worked well.

Solution for Worst Case Scenarios – Project Pegasus. Prior to Katrina, we had been working on a project we called Pegasus. Pegasus is our vision of a way to increase the scope and deployment of portable, satellite, cell sites (satellite COLTS) in an emergency.

These COLTS are portable cell sites with satellite connectivity mounted on light trucks. They can be driven or flown in to a disaster area. They work with any Cingular GSM phone enabling victims and first responders to use their existing phones during a crisis. These COLTS provide a satellite connection to any of our operational switches, become operational in a matter of hours, and require no commercial power or wired network infrastructure. The satellite COLT shown as Attachment #3 below is one of our two prototypes that was expedited for delivery to New Orleans and is working there today via its satellite connection to our switch in Miami.

Next Steps. We are moving as expeditiously as possible to expand our Pegasus Project so satellite COLTS can be built and made available in key locations around the U.S. for more-effective deployment. We know that Pegasus is only a start to a more fully-developed set of tools for worst-case scenarios.

We have resolved to open this project through the CTIA for cooperative rather than competitive development so that we can truly bring together the best-of-the-best to develop the full potential of wireless to help people stay connected in even the worst crises.

I thank you for your time and attention today and in the days ahead.